

INSTRUCTIONS FOR REQUESTING A U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) SECRETARIAL DISASTER DESIGNATION

Agricultural disasters, caused by unusual adverse weather conditions and quarantines, substantially affect farmers and ranchers throughout California every year. The following sequence of events provides information to request a USDA Secretarial designation.

It is up to each county to determine which agency will have lead responsibility in coordinating the request for an USDA Secretarial designation, the County Emergency Services Office or the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office. A local proclamation of an emergency is not required to request an USDA Secretarial designation; therefore, the Board of Supervisors' involvement in this procedure will differ from county to county. Each county, however, should establish a coordination plan involving these three entities.

- Local government becomes aware of an incident that caused agricultural damages. The local government contacts County Agricultural Commissioner's Office. The County Agricultural Commissioner accepts inquiry from local entity and/or growers AND if necessary, convenes Advisory Board.
- The County Agricultural Commissioner determines that an unusual incident has occurred which caused severe physical property or production losses, which impacted local farmers.
- The county's lead agency informs the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) either through the appropriate Administrative Region who will then notify the State OES Recovery Branch, Individual Assistance Section, or notify the Individual Assistance Section directly. The Individual Assistance Section will provide lead agency with a copy of the *California County Agricultural Commissioner Disaster Report* form, technical assistance, and follow up with any request for assistance, if necessary.
- The county has 60 days from the end of the incident to request implementation of the USDA Emergency Loan Program.
- The county shall submit a letter addressed to the Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (State OES) requesting that the USDA declare an agricultural disaster and implementation of the Emergency Loan Program. The request should include a completed *California County Agricultural Commissioner Disaster Report* form(s).
- The Director of OES, as the Governor's designee, must submit the request to USDA within 90 days of the incident.



- Individual Assistance Section will review the request, and compose letter to USDA requesting implementation of the USDA Emergency Loan Program.
- The USDA Secretary's office notifies the Farm Service Agency (FSA) located in California of request. FSA will verify damage assessment information submitted by the county. FSA will work with local USDA agencies, other federal, state, and local agricultural agencies, as appropriate, to conduct an assessment of crop and production losses. FSA will make recommendation to USDA Secretary.
- USDA Secretary will either approve or deny request and notify State OES.
- State OES will notify County Board of Supervisors, County OES, and County Agricultural Commissioner of decision.
- If the request is approved the county notifies farmers, ranchers, and aquaculturists of the availability of the emergency loans.